

Artist Foundation of San Antonio Application

Zach Dorn ♦ *An Excruciatingly Ordinary Toy Theater Show* ♦ Artist Statement

I am a theater artist who aims to rediscover the suspension of disbelief from the six year-old within all of us, and use it to reexamine life as an adult. This delicate resuscitation of the audience's imaginative spirit has invoked the use of puppetry, live cinematic experimentations, fast-paced storytelling techniques, and reinvention. With puppeteers at hand, an old record player transforms into a 1920s casting director. Suitcases in the bedroom of a mysterious houseguest cast glowing silhouettes of elephants, chimpanzees, and airplanes onto the walls. This process of de-familiarizing the familiar creates a sense of wonderment and surprise in the viewer that is frequently at the core of my work. Like unruly children, my ideas rebel against traditional performance techniques. My live puppet productions have moved away from conventional staging by transforming entire theater spaces into new and unfamiliar worlds.

Shadow puppet shows, illuminated from archaic overhead projectors, have shined across the brick exteriors of apartment buildings, the hardwood floors of museums, and the deteriorating walls of abandoned schoolhouses. Instead of simple stage directions, my original stories have moved through countless, fast-paced scenes. Like a visit through Disney World's Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, my spectacles are performative funhouses that jump through time, circle with excitement, and embrace untraditional narratives. It is my hope that by eliminating passivity, fostering wonderment, and broadening the scope of the conventional stage, my audience can make a return to the limitless imagination of youth.